

Plan a circle: “To Build a Fire”

Jack London (1908) · public-domain short story · grades 8–11 · ~1 week / two meetings. Rights: Public domain.
Kit section 5 (group agreement & calendar) filled in for one text — a finished plan students see before writing their own. *Tinted italic* = sample answers.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	<i>“To Build a Fire” — Jack London (1908). Public-domain short story.</i>
Group / period / dates	<i>Noah’s group · Period __ · Meetings __ & __</i>
Grade / TEKS target (p. 3)	English I · §110.36 — 6(A): theme through characterization/plot; 5(C,D): commentary and summary; 1(D): student-led discussion.
Learning intention	We are learning to explain how the man’s choices and the setting reveal a theme about nature and human pride.
Success criteria	I bring one open question, cite two details with locations, respond to a peer, and name how my thinking changed.

Reading map & calendar

Chunk	Read through	Meeting date · leader
<i>1</i>	<i>The man sets out at 75-below despite the old-timer’s warning, and breaks through the ice.</i>	<i>Tue · Leader: Noah</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>The failed fires, the growing panic, and the ending — the dog moves on.</i>	<i>Thu · Leader: Elena</i>

Members & first-meeting jobs (p. 7 roles)

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)
<i>Noah</i>	<i>Questioner</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>
<i>Elena</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>
<i>Ravi</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>	<i>Evidence tracker</i>
<i>Grace</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Questioner</i>

Text-specific discussion questions (open — more than one answer)

- **Predict:** After the man ignores the old-timer’s advice, what will the cold force him to face? What clue supports it?
- **Question:** Why might London give the dog instincts the man lacks? What does that contrast argue?
- **Clarify:** What does “the trouble with him was that he was without imagination” mean for his fate?
- **Summarize:** Order the man’s attempts to survive after he gets wet, without opinion.
- **Interpret the theme:** How do the man’s choices and the setting reveal a theme about nature vs. pride? Use two details.

Optional Jigsaw lenses (p. 4): *Character* (the man and the dog) · *Setting* (the Yukon cold as antagonist) · *Plot* (the chain of small errors) · *Theme* (instinct vs. arrogance) · *Language* (repetition of temperature and warnings).

Sample 3–2–1 notes: Ravi, setting lens

Name: *Ravi* · Home group: *Noah's group* · Period ____ · Meetings ____ & ____ · Section: *"To Build a Fire," Chunk 2* · Expert lens: *Setting*

What a finished prep looks like. Kit section 6 / Organizer A completed for one reader, so students can compare their notes to a strong model.

Questions <i>Could the man have survived with the dog's instincts?</i> <i>Is the ending fate, or his own doing?</i>	3 · Important ideas <i>1. The cold is an active force, not just a backdrop.</i> <i>2. Small mistakes — getting wet, a badly placed fire — turn fatal.</i> <i>3. The dog reads danger the man dismisses.</i>
Vocabulary <i>conjectural = based on guessing.</i> <i>apprehension = uneasy awareness of danger.</i>	2 · Supporting details <i>1. The man's spittle crackles in the air (early). → Shows how extreme and deadly the cold is.</i> <i>2. Snow from the spruce buries his fire (middle). → Nature punishes his haste.</i>

1 · Summary in my own words

A man travels alone in deadly cold, ignores a warning, and dies after failing to keep a fire; the dog moves on.

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: *Nature is indifferent; survival needs humility and instinct, not confidence.*

Synthesis (two lenses): *The environment (setting) enacts the theme: pride without imagination cannot survive an indifferent nature. Text points: the crackling cold (Chunk 1) and the buried fire (Chunk 2).*

After discussion: *My thinking became clearer once the group compared evidence.*

TEKS evidence: 6(C,D) supported inference; 7(A) theme through characters/events; 1(D) response to a peer. · Pair with the PlotPoint "To Build a Fire" room.